

St Peter's Parish Chest December 2013

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A monthly bulletin of all that is accomplished by and within our church's community

Suggested Contribution 30p

Letter from the Vicar

Shine as a light in the world



I have always thought it a little strange to hate a season. Seasons can't help being as they are. Seasons bring variety to the daily life through the changing face of nature. Of course there are seasons we prefer over others. When I was younger I loved autumn because of the presage of Christmas. But like all childlike reflections the disappointment that struck as soon as the goal had been reached was shattering and threw me into the depression of winter. I never really liked summer. I didn't like the heat and my childhood memory (obviously erroneous) is one of constantly hot, sweat dripping days and sticky, sheet clinging nights. I liked spring too, bright days (in my memory) and new, fresh colours.

All that has changed of course. I love summers, and crisp winter days, daffodil filled spring mornings and golden autumn afternoons. There are elements of the seasons we might still find difficult to cope with, mine is the dark days; the days when you have to put the lights on in the mid-afternoon, when you get up and it is still dark and dark when you walk out the door to work, dark when you walk back in, the never ending night.

It is no accident of course that the church has picked up on this aspect of the late autumn season. As Advent dawns the theme of light and darkness is quite prominent. The Advent collect opens with the invocation 'Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light'. Of course the parallel is drawn between the life we have on earth and the hope of eternity revealed in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The works of sin that we carry out, knowingly or otherwise, in the daily path of life we tread and the sin free existence we will share in the liberation of paradise. This forward hope, dangled before us as part of the promise of salvation.

I did something the other day that makes the dark days of winter seem less hopeless. I planted some seeds. It was quite an experience. Gardeners amongst you will know this is the time of year to plant broad bean seeds for a late spring harvest, hopefully before the black fly strike. I have discovered (and you may already know this) a strain of lettuce seed that you can plant now for spring harvest. It felt so good preparing for a crop that speaks of spring and summer food. A small thing I know, but one full of expectation. If well looked after I could have a crop as early as February/March. Won't that be great?

It got me thinking about the Advent message in the midst of the autumn and winter darkness. The Advent message does speak of future hopes; it also speaks of present expectations. Salvation is not just for the future but the here and now too. The danger of just looking to a future paradise is to miss the glory of God here today. Looking for God in future events could mean we miss him in the present moment. Yet Advent reminds us each year that it is here salvation begins; with the next breath, the next decision, the next movement salvation and our journey of faith continues. Whether we are in dark places of the golden sunshine of autumn God's love is constantly with us calling us to a deeper faith and relationship with him; caring for us and supporting us when we need. To know and love God we shouldn't wait until tomorrow but shine now as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father.

Fr David

Advent and Christmas



New acolytes or Christmas angels?

By the time you are reading this it will be Advent Sunday and we will have just finished tidying up after our **Christmas Bazaar**. (Full report in January.)

During the Advent service we shall hear again the wonderful words of the Advent readings and hymns and we shall light the first of our Advent candles. There is much comfort every year in the familiarity of these "tidings of great joy" and also a call to each of us to look afresh at their meaning for each of us this year. *Details of all Advent and Christmas services on last page of this issue.*

Advent Reading



"There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind." CS Lewis at work in Oxford

In amongst the activity of "getting ready for Christmas" finding the space to read and reflect may be ambitious. Perhaps it is only after Christmas that the opportunity to curl up with a kindle will arise.

This year has marked the fiftieth anniversary of the deaths of several significant men and women, from President Kennedy to Aldous Huxley. It is to another writer who died on 22nd November 1963 that we might turn for some good Advent and Christmas fare. CS Lewis was a prolific writer of works on Christian topics as well as, famously, books for children.

Many new books about Lewis have been published year to coincide with this anniversary. The following may be of especial interest to readers of the *St Peter's Parish Chest*:

- *CS Lewis: A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* by Alister McGrath. Published by Wiley-Blackwell
- *The Lion's World: A journey into the heart of Narnia* by Rowan Williams. Published by SPCK

If you enjoyed the Narnia stories and have not read any of CS Lewis's work for adult readers then you might well enjoy the following:

- *The Screwtape Letters* (Recently BBC Radio 4's Book of the Week, wonderfully given voice and life by Simon Russell Beale). Published by Harpur Collins
- The Space Trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* – stimulating and unusual science-fiction writing). Published by Harpur Collins
- *The Great Divorce* (Lewis's clearest expression of what freewill means). Published by Harpur Collins

All things Christmas!

Last Minute Christmas Cake



Many of the older established cook book writers, as well as their newer celebrity successors, have something broadly described as a "last minute" Christmas Cake. This one really does only take minutes in the mixing though rather longer in the oven. It is mainly "Delia" with a bit of local adjustment and has always "worked" – so far!

Grease and line an 8 inch round cake tin and preheat oven to Gas Mark 3/325°F/170°C

In a big bowl mix together well all of the following: 1lb jar of good mincemeat, 8oz of wholemeal flour, 3 level teaspoons of baking powder, 5oz dark brown sugar, 5oz softened butter or margarine, 6oz mixed dried fruit, 2oz chopped toasted hazelnuts, grated zest of a small orange and a small lemon and three large eggs.

When well mixed put mixture into prepared cake tin. Smooth the top and decorate with 4oz of whole blanched almonds. Put in the oven for 1 hour and thirty minutes or until it is well browned and springy to the touch.

Christmas Puzzle



Can you identify the "Christmas" trees below?

1. A cosy one?
2. Suitable for a retired archbishop?
3. A French architectural feature?
4. Take care of this one or it will be sad!
5. 2nd person singular or plural
6. A tidy one?

Christmas by John Betjeman

(In this poem, written in the 1950s, the poet reflects on the bustle of the season and asks searching questions about what it all really means. The poem is a very popular one and although some of its images are rather dated its final lines more than stand the test of time.)

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'.

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!'
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall ?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true ? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in bread and wine.



A detail from sixteenth century Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel's *The Numbering at Bethlehem*. A favourite painting of John Betjeman (1906 -1984) showing that Christmas has always been a busy time!

Christmas Giving



A Syrian family helped by Christian Aid

The Parish Chest regularly highlights the charities supported by members of the St Peter's congregation as well as those receiving the proceeds of the Christmas Bazaar. This year the Bazaar supported the work of Christian Aid with Syrian refugees, and Ealing Street Pastors. Money will also be sent to Ealing Mencap and Persona Dolls.



Ealing Street Pastors work every season of the year

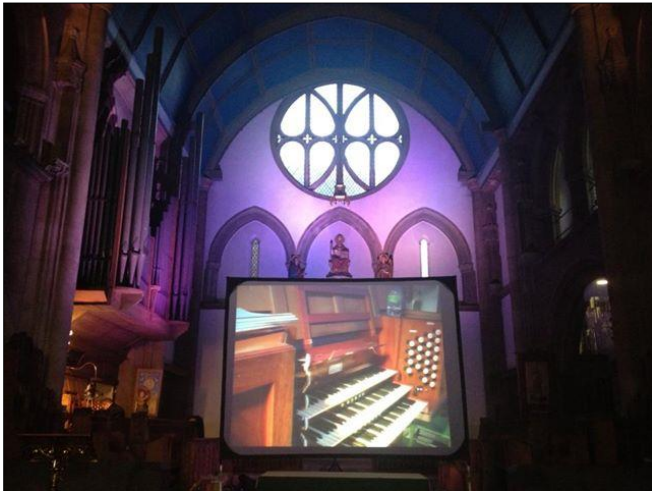
If you are reading this and wondering how to raise the profile of a charity close to your own heart then please think about writing a short piece for *The Parish Chest*. Please also have a word with one of the Mission Team, who will be meeting in the New Year to discuss recipients of outside giving for 2014. Mission Team members are Fr David, Madeleine Morse and Susan Peatfield. They will be delighted to hear your suggestions.

Christmas Day Lunch 2013

Fr David writes:

A new venture you may be interested in is a parish lunch on Christmas Day. The plan is this: Those who would like to have lunch here rather than to travel on Christmas Day are asked to sign the list at the back of the church. Depending on numbers it will either be held in the church hall or the vicarage. Drinks will be served from 12.30pm with lunch at 1pm. Lunch will be Turkey with trimmings and Christmas pudding. Vegetarian options can be offered if requested. The suggested donation toward this, including drinks, is £20, or whatever you are able to contribute. If you would like to bring a partner or a friend that will be fine. So, sign up and come along. It should be fun.

A Feast of Music!



The "big picture" of the organist's art and skill

St Peter's boasts a very fine organ that we enjoy hearing played by Mark James, our Director of Music, Sunday by Sunday. Mark is keen to develop this tradition of organ recital and to this end organised the wonderful event on **Friday 25th October** described by Richard Peatfield below. Later in this article Mark James gives a preview of more musical treats in store.

October Organ Recital

Richard Peatfield writes:

About 40 people, many from outside the Parish, were privileged to hear an organ recital from David Davies, Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, on Friday 25th October. Mr Davies introduced each of the pieces he played, which were drawn mainly from the late 19th and early 20th century French repertoire, with a leavening of Bach and Elgar. His finale was a bravura arrangement of tunes from Bizet's Carmen.

The performances were superbly played, and the evening was enhanced for less musical listeners by a video screen arrangement so we could see a relay of his hands (and sometimes his feet too) - to manage three sets of manual keys and one with his feet as well as innumerable stops demonstrates skills that must take years to acquire.

The audience was fulsome in its appreciation of his playing, and Mr Davies was very complimentary about our organ. We hope this recital has set a precedent, and look forward to many more at St Peter's.



Mark James with David Davies at St Peter's

Mark James writes:

As an Exeter University alumnus, it was a special pleasure to welcome David Davies, Organist and Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral to give the first in a series of recitals at St. Peter's. David showcased our fabulous 1893 Bishop and Son (London) organ as Dr Richard Peatfield has described.

Future recitals will include other outstanding musicians including the organists of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle - *Richard Pinel*, Liverpool (Anglican) Cathedral, *Professor Ian Tracey*, and musicians from Bruges and Norway.

Our next recital date is **Saturday 4th January 2014** when the organ will be put through its paces with some toe-tapping tunes courtesy of this year's BBC Proms organist, Richard Hills, also organist of St. Mary's Bourne Street and a teacher at Christ the Saviour School, Ealing.



Richard Hills, our recitalist on 4th January 2014

Watch Richard demonstrate the Royal Albert Hall organ on the BBC Proms website.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01fp4bb>

Below are some extracts from a review of Hill's Prom, No, 58.

Prom 58's afternoon concert of light organ music was created to showcase the Royal Albert Hall's enormous Henry Willis organ.

Introduced to the stage by presenter Christopher Cook, Hills was bouncy and smiley as he bowed to the audience for his BBC Proms debut performance. His light-hearted nature prepared the audience for a host of delights and nostalgia at this bank holiday matinee concert, as we were encouraged to conjure up images of Blackpool tower and Brighton Dome. Organist Richard Hills is an enthusiast for what he describes as the "golden age" of the theatre organ: the 1930s to the 1950s, when melody was of key importance.

He made each piece he performed look effortless and was confident in the spotlight. As the concert progressed and he warmed up, Hills seemed to be wading through progressively more difficult musical material, but he never tired of energy. Hills said that "light music is having a resurgence", and that "hopefully people will be able to discover it with fresh ears."

The encore played by Hills was humorous. He played his own version of the famous jazz standard *Tiger Rag* with a series of well-known classical tunes interjected, including *Land of Hope and Glory*. The opening of Widor's *Organ Symphony no. 5 in F minor* received a huge laugh and applause from the audience as he managed to work it in to the jazz standard. This showed Hills' true mastery of the bridge between classical and theatre organ music.

Extracts from a review by Alexandra Hamilton-Ayres on 29th August 2013.

Christingle



One of our busiest services over the Christmas period is our **Christingle at 3.30pm on Christmas Eve**. At this service, which is especially suitable for children, the nativity story is told, the figures of the Holy Family are placed in the crib and all present receive a Christingle – an orange with a candle. Below is a brief history of this well-loved but fairly recent tradition.

"The Christingle has its origins in the Moravian Church. At Christmas 1747 in Germany, Bishop Johannes de Watteville decided to make a simple symbol to express the message of Christmas in a fresh and lively way. He gave each child a lighted candle wrapped in a red ribbon, with a prayer that said "Lord Jesus, kindle a flame in these dear children's hearts". In 1968, John Pensom of The Children's Society introduced Christingle services to the Church of England, where the custom spread quickly."

Join us!



Music Notes

David Blumlein writes:

All Saints Sunday gave us the "Hymn" anthem, "O for a closer walk with God" by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924). Stanford was one of the mainstays of the English Choral Revival in the later 19th century and early 20th century, composing a wealth of musically-rich anthems and Services. This is one of his short anthems based on a hymn tune, a melody from the Scottish Psalter of 1635 with words by W. Cowper (1731 -1800) – Stanford arranges the tune in a more interesting way and adds a completely independent organ accompaniment, the whole creating a delightful effect both for the singers (SATB) and listeners. Stanford of course wrote, like his pupil Charles Wood, very expertly for voices. This piece dates from 1909.

At all Remembrance Day services are heard the moving words of the poet Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943) "They shall not grow old" from his poem "For the Fallen" written in September 1914. In our service the musical setting was by Douglas Guest, Organist of Westminster Abbey (1963 -81) who is remembered nowadays for this one exquisite composition. He wrote it for the service at the Abbey in 1971.

Year's Mind

1 December	Malcolm Dillon (2004)
3 December	Doreen Walker (1989)
6 December	Colin Pratt (2011)
14 December	Marcel Rogers (1959) Carole Johnson (2008)
15 December	Jill Ford (1961)
19 December	Diana Hewlings (1990)
21 December	Beatrice Clover (1957)
23 December	Daphne Doherty (2002)
24 December	Elwyn Jones (2001)
27 December	Connie Ives (2002)
29 December	David Hewlings (1990)



*We wish you a Happy Christmas and
Blessed New Year!*

Advent and Christmas at St Peter's

Sunday	1 December	<i>Sung Evensong</i>	5.30pm
Wednesday	4 December	<i>Holy Communion with Advent Reflection</i>	7.30pm
Sunday	8 December	<i>Advent Carols with St Barnabas & Pitshanger Methodist</i>	6.30pm
Wednesday	11 December	<i>Holy Communion with Advent Reflection</i>	7.30pm
Sunday	15 December	<i>Evening Prayer</i>	5.30pm
Wednesday	18 December	<i>Holy Communion with Advent Reflection</i>	7.30pm
Sunday	22 December	<i>Service of the Nine Lessons & Carols by candlelight followed by mince pies and mulled wine</i>	5.30pm
Christmas Eve		<i>Christingle Service</i>	3.30pm
		<i>Midnight Mass of the Nativity</i>	11.30pm
Christmas Day		<i>Mass of the Holy Nativity</i>	10.00am
Sunday	29 December	<i>Mass of the Holy Family</i>	10.00am
Wednesday	1 January	<i>First Mass of the New Year followed by drinks reception</i>	11.00am